



State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South • PO Box 94987 • Lincoln, NE 68509

Country Inn & Suites/Boardroom

5353 North 27th

April 11, 2006

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

402-476-5353

MINUTES

Present: *Sharon Bloechle, Kim Boyce, Eileen Curry, Don Crouch, Linda Douglas, Alvin Fox, Gayle Hahn, Sandy Ham, Margy Hoffmann, Marc Hultine, David Jelinek, Jason Kerkman, Mike Newman, Kipp Ransom, Vicki Rasmussen, Mark Schultz, and Pearl Van Zandt*

Absent: *Les Kimmons, Susan Rocker, Merwyn Vavrina,*

Minutes by *Cheryle Adams*

Gayle Hahn called the meeting to order

Gayle introduced Jason Kerkman. He is from Wisconsin and has been in Nebraska for two years and is employed with Workforce Investment as a Program Navigator working with their one-stops. Jason has been working with this program since January and is currently working on his Master's Degree in public health.

I Public Comment: None

II. Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Sharon to approve agenda with noted change. Alvin seconded the motion. The motion carried, agenda approved.

III. Approval of Minutes from February 14, 2006

Motion made by Kipp to approve the February 14th minutes. Sharon seconded the motion. Motion carried, agenda approved.

IV. Director's Report (*Margy Hoffmann*)

1. Transition. Recently there was a roundtable discussion concerning transition. Over 55 VR staff including Office Directors attended to discuss what is going on around the state in the area of transition. They discussed some of the new things that are happening as well as those things that are working and not working. VR is looking at how to effectively serve 14-15 year olds. The staff evaluations from the day were positive and a committee of transition staff was created to work with Jack Sheppard. The committee will include 4-5 people that are working on transition. They will be looking at policies/practices and the future direction of transition. They are working on creating a resource document that staff

around the state could use with the younger students.

RSA has decided to do a survey to look at what is happening in transition in the various states and agencies. There is a big push on the federal level to do more in the area of transition. The first step will be to look at what are the agencies doing now. It will take approximately two years to get the results together and a report completed. RSA hopes this will provide some perspective for future direction/legislation.

2. Don and Janet have been working together on the career planning training/employment discussion. They are working towards creating a video tape and a self-assessment booklet., creating a 2 part video/materials that we can use with new staff. This will demonstrate how to do the employment discussion and the career planning discussion using the notebook. They are videotaping actual counseling sessions. This will be used as an aid with new staff training. There are three taping sessions set up and will start this Friday. This will show an interview with a consumer and the consumer completing the information. VR's newest team member Kelli Funk, multi media specialist, will be doing the multimedia production. Her first video was on the acceptable use policy which is available to the Department of Education. She has also completed a video welcoming new staff to VR, highlighting Frank.
3. There are discussions on developing consumer service pamphlets. The committee is looking at benefit analysis, job placement, employment warranty, employment planning and job seeking skills . The pamphlet will use approximately 300-500 words describing the service. They will try to keep a familiar look to each brochure. The intent is to set an expectation for clients, telling them what they should expect from this service.
4. VR is looking at moving the Lincoln office from Sutter Place Mall on 48th and Hwy. 2 to an area that could better serve consumers. Frank would like a place that is fairly central, looking at bus access. He wants to develop an office that is friendly to consumers with areas that are open and more inviting. Offices will be cubicles, with private interview rooms, similar to Grand Island. Another reason to move is the problem the current site has with brown recluse spiders. VR is currently in process of getting permission from Building Division to make the move. ATP is planning to move with VR. The State Office has also discussed the idea of relocating to the new location. A final decision hasn't been made yet concerning the State Office relocation. VR will need to look at the department processes
5. Vickie Schaepler, Director with the Kearney office has resigned. She previously worked with Burlington Northern in this capacity and they chose to outsource when she made the move to Voc Rehab. She will be working for Union Pacific as a rehab specialist. They currently have 6 rehab specialists, (5 used to work for Nebraska VR). VR won't be filling the position immediately. Typically the position will be open internally before it is opened external. Judy Vohland will be working with the Kearney office assessing their needs.
6. VR has begun a new partnership with Madonna. This is in the beginning stages working with the day program. Two staff, one from ATP and one VR person will be going there on a regular basis for a month. They will be working with people that are finishing up their program with the intent to see if they want to go back to work. To work with consumers before they leave Madonna puts them in a better position as they generally still have their current job and can possibly avoid the need to go on disability benefits. Dennis King is working with this partnership.

7. Reauthorization of Workforce Investment Act. Margy stated that nothing is happening on that front. If it doesn't happen in May the process will start again next year. It has been two years since authorization. The President's budget piece is not linked with VR, but could eventually impact VR. The Presidents' package has a 14% cut with Workforce reconsidering having the one stops. If there is a tremendous cut Workforce will not be able to sustain that program. It depends on what will happen with the President's budget.

VR is a mandatory program the President isn't in the position to cut our budget. It is a nice place to be. So many domestic programs will be cut which will eventually affect us in the end, causing us to supplement more money to provide services.

8. The annual report has been mailed out and the Transition pamphlet is finished. Sandy distributed the final product to the council
9. The IPE Booklet has been revised and Sandy should receive that tomorrow. The revisions were minor things. This is the notebook that consumers complete.
10. Transition Resource Guide is available. It is not intended to be distributed to schools. It was designed for our staff to use with the school, with the intent that it would be a resource for staff. This will always be an ongoing changing booklet, a work in progress.

V. Old Business

A. Going to Work Forums update (*Don Crouch*)

Tim Kolb has been hired as coordinator for the forums through the infrastructure grant. This will help in bringing in the consumers to tell them about the incentives that are available to assist them in going back to work and to bring in employers to talk about the tax incentives available to companies who hire people with disabilities. The forums are scheduled to meet in the month of April in Omaha, Kearney, North Platte and Scottsbluff. Don attended the first forum and was disappointed with the attendance. Few people attended, most were from other agencies, very few employers attended. The evaluations were positive with people liking the consumer panel the best.

B. Self-Employment Program update (*Don Crouch*)

Don gave pertinent background information concerning this program. It was decided seven years ago to relook at the program. Up till that time, staff were left to figure it out by themselves but were reluctant as they didn't have the business background. The committee hired Wayne Miller, a private business consultant. This worked well over the last several years with over 50 self-employment start-ups last year. Wayne has left Nebraska and VR is looking for another consultant. VR intends to contract for this service with an Iowa non-profit organization (The Abilities Fund). They will present workshops across the state for those individuals that are interested in self-employment. They will hire a program manager to work with the Nebraska staff.

The process will still have the same basic steps; application process, feasibility study, assisting with the business plan, monitoring, etc. VR staff will not have to authorize for each step since this is a contract. This will help eliminate some of the paperwork.

VR would like to start the program in May, but the program manager that was selected for Nebraska backed out so interviews will start again June 1. The program managers won't be housed in a VR office, but will work out of their own office serving the whole state.

VR has an agreement with the VA to serve clients concerning self-employment. They have started a self-employment program, but have few staff. They have n caps on money whereas VR does.

Working Lunch (11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.) Committee Meetings

VI New Business

A. Federal Monitoring Report (Frank Lloyd/Don Crouch)

The regional offices closed last summer. There has always been a regional office and when they closed that meant that RSA in Washington had to administer the program and monitor the agencies directly. They were left with several monitoring reports that weren't completed. Regional offices had done the monitoring and hadn't finished the reports as yet.

They contacted us and told us that we have issues that we need to correct concerning our 2004 monitoring report. We are now in federal 2006 fiscal. The regional offices conducted the monitoring in 2004. The issue on how to monitor in the future will be an issue. VR has some issues with the findings and thinks that spending lots of time on the 2004 findings doesn't make much sense.

First Finding:

The first finding concerns the federal requirement that state VR agencies develop interagency agreements with institutions of higher education. Nebraska VR sent a letter to every Nebraska post-secondary institution several years ago indicating VR's role with students served by VR while also pointing out the school's responsibilities under ADA. VR received only one reply. This letter has served to meet the federal requirement for several years and has been approved in writing by federal representatives. RSA representatives now have indicated that the letter does not meet the federal requirement. Nebraska VR will be sending a formal letter requesting the official RSA position on this issue.

Second Finding:

VR is required to set a time standard for developing the IPE for each consumer served. Nebraska set a standard of 90 days from the date the individual was found eligible. (Some states set longer standards.) In the review done in 2004 the federal reviewers set a minimum acceptance of 90% compliance. VR was not aware of this 90% minimum. The finding was that 83% of Nebraska cases met the 90 day requirement and this was lower than the 90% the reviewers had set as the minimum. RSA has indicated they will accept case file explanations in the future for cases that do not meet the 90-day requirement. VR will put in place a requirement for staff to do that.

Third Finding

In the federal review completed in 2004 the reviewers were looking at the job goal listed on a consumers IPE and comparing that to the job they had when the case was closed. Again they set a 90% minimum rate for compliance. VR met this in 87% of the cases. Federal regulations do require that the IPE be amended if the job goal changes. VR staff have been amending the IPE if the individual's job goal changes and services will be provided towards the new job goal. VR has not required staff to amend the IPE if the individual takes a job during the job placement phase that is different from the job that was being pursued. VR felt that at this point no other services would be provided so there would be no reason to revise the IPE. In the future VR will amend the goal in every case and this will meet the federal requirement.

NOTE: In the second and third finding VR was not aware there was a 90% expectance until the report was received.

Fourth Finding:

One week ago VR received a call from RSA indicating VR is out of compliance with federal requirement on 'order of selection'. VR established it's current procedures for order of selection in the early 1990's. It has been approved multiple times by RSA through their approval of VR's State Plan and Rule 72. VR's department attorney actually met with the regional RSA director several years ago to discuss and seek approval for this. VR hopes this is a misunderstanding. VR's attorney will be sending RSA a letter showing VR believes the current procedures meet the requirement. Also, RSA representatives will be in Nebraska in August and this will be discussed.

B. Meeting with RSA officials at the August SRC meeting (Frank Lloyd/Don Crouch)

The federal partner wants to come to Nebraska for a week to spend time visiting with our staff, consumers and with both SILC and SRC councils.

Don doesn't know what they are planning. They will be here in August to attend the SRC meeting. It will give the SRC council a chance to interact with them. It is open to anything SRC members want to discuss with them. Don will send out an update prior to their arrival. He is not sure on how many will be here.

VII Reports

A. CAP Report (Vicki Rasmussen)

The committee will be doing a follow up on the IPE booklet to assess it's effectiveness. They plan to wait since it was just implemented. They are working on creating a survey to show whether the booklet is making a difference in VR and with the consumer. Someone from Gallup will be coming in August to meet with the committee. They will help them develop the survey and analyze the results. Vicki and Don plan to meet with Frank, Margy, Janet and Dennis to discuss what questions they would like included in the survey. By August they hope to have some draft questions.

B. SILC Report (Alvin Fox)

Nothing to report.

C. ATP Report (Mark Schultz)

The last two months Mark has been going to VR offices to discuss ATP's services and supports and how they could assist VR with various issues. Mark will summarize his general findings and come back with specific recommendations to VR on how those needs might be addressed. Some general findings were reported:

There is a need for awareness about AT for school administrators and directors, at the frontline level.

There is a need for greater awareness about AT options on a community level, for parents, family members and students. Parents fear that their child will be stigmatized if they have to use AT. Need to make the technology classroom based, not based in the resource room. This is particularly true in the rural areas of the state. Need practical technology solutions that are transferable from school to work or post-secondary. Schools don't know how to adapt for a student's needs in the workplace and VR is unable as they don't meet the age criteria. ATP is trying to step in and fit into that need.

There is still an unwritten practice that AT is not written into the IEP as it will cost the school. Some AT is not recommended because of this.

Need to work closely with employers to take a proactive approach to technology in the workplace. ADA is still an issue for employers.

There needs to some changes made to policy so the technology can go from the school to the workplace. Need to be able to share equipment from one district to another. Need to promote sharing/recycling. Lots of equipment is just sitting in closets. The needs for ongoing technology support is lacking. There needs to be a broader range of equipment that consumers can try out and a need for more demonstration on how to use the equipment.

D. Committee Reports

1. Client Services Committee (*Vic Rasmussen*)

The committee will be doing a follow up on the IPE booklet to assess it's effectiveness. They plan to wait since it was just implemented. They are working on creating a survey to show whether the booklet is making a difference in VR and with the consumer. Someone from Gallup will be coming in August to meet with the committee. They will help them develop the survey and analyze the results. Vic plan to meet with Frank, Margy, Janet and Dennis to discuss what questions they would like included in the survey. By August they hope to have some draft questions.

2. Employer Services Committee (Eileen Curry)—Jim Coyle attending

Jim Coyle brought information for the committee concerning the top to common jobs, looking at where people were placed, looking at the employers who have employed VR folks. The goal to do outreach to employers to use this information as an outreach tool.

Jim stated that the council needed more employers as members. There is currently one open position. The council needs to have a balance with the majority of council members having a disability.

Gayle attended the three day forum in Kansas City. One of the sessions was “state of the states.” Janet was there representing NE VR. Iowa, Missouri and Kansas were also there. Each representative had five minutes to brief the forum on what their state is doing.

There are three continuing questions that concerned outcomes, funding and order of selection/waiting lists. Gayle stated that Nebraska is doing well compared to the other states in this region.

3. Transition Services Committee (Linda Douglas)

Jack is now working for VR in the area of transition and he is spending 90% of his time with VR and 10% with SPED. The new transition brochure has been distributed and he is getting good feedback on this.

The transition guide is now being utilized by the offices. Two staff from the Omaha office helped to develop it. This is mostly for internal use and will assist the school districts in working with those transition students ages 14-15. The guide will be reprinted creating a smaller guide that will be accessible to the school districts.

Working on creating a small focus group with VR staff, taking a representative from each area around the state. Will look at the needs, resources, what is working/not working. Need to get a better understanding of where the issues are and what VR needs to do to improve service continually.

Over the years testing has been required, every three years to make sure the student qualifies for SPED assistance. The last few years there has been more flexibility. Education on civil rights, post secondary training, need high schools/post secondary not to require to test, but if they student is made eligible for VR services, VR could pay for the testing. Parents would need to request that their child be tested. Post secondary and school districts really don't want to pay for testing.

It was questioned that if the information that is 4-6 years old is still an accurate reflection as to who they are and their needs; why would we do an evaluation? This will be an ongoing struggle. Post secondary institutions are better at this today; far more accommodating. The post secondary institutions developed current testing with guidance that was put out by the National Association of Schools.

The committee is also working on the transition roundtable. Teams would come in and present activities they have done with the various school districts—those districts that have involved students. People coming together to share ideas/resource, looking at those things that are working. One of the offices in the central part of the state has developed a list serv. Every resource teacher is on the list serv. VR could possibly send them out information every week concerning jobs, even jobs for kids—summer employment. The school would then give the information to the students and parents.

The committee is planning to invite five different schools to come to one of these meetings to discuss what their needs are and their relationship with VR. Would like to get a good cross section-maybe 12-15 school folks from all over, large schools, small schools, those working with LD, those working with physical disabilities. Next year and the following year the committee would like to develop a survey concerning the schools working relationship with VR. What does VR need to do different?

Guidance counselors are spending time talking to Nebraska Career Management system, this is the old Voc. Ed./Tech program. There will be a requirement in Rule 10 that every student in school will have a personal Individual Education Plan. This would be from 9th grade through graduation and will have a strong vocational component to it. Janet has been working with the Nebraska Career Information System. A new program is being developed, a comprehensive vocational academic program that is web based. The NCIS program is similar, but the new one will have many more features. Students can start looking at information as a younger age and even input information. The Department of Education has entered into an agreement with other states on developing this program. It will be free to schools and in the long run should save the states time, money and effort.

Motion made by Eileen Curry to adjourn the meeting. Linda Douglas seconded the motion.

The motion carried, meeting adjourned.

The next meeting is scheduled for August 15, 2006 at Country Inn & Suites, Lincoln, Nebraska.